REMARKS

The Office Action dated September 11, 2006 has been received and carefully noted. The above amendments to the claims and the following remarks, are submitted as a full and complete response thereto.

Claims 1-4, 10-12, and 15-17, 19 are amended to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter of the present invention and new claim 20 is added. Support for the amendments is found at least in page 5 lines 10-14 of the specification of the present application. No new matter is added. Claims 1-20 are respectfully submitted for consideration.

The Office Action objected to claim 10 because of a typographical informality. Applicants respectfully submit that claim 10 is amended to correct any known typographical error. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection to claim 10 is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejected claim 19 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent No. 5,956,037 to Osawa et al. (Osawa). Applicants respectfully submit that Osawa fails to disclose or suggest all of the features of any of the pending claims.

Claim 19 is directed to a server for managing recordings in a system capable of providing a plurality of user terminals with synchronized playback of the recordings via a communications network. Synchronization messages are sent to the plurality of user terminals during playback of a recording, thereby causing the plurality of user terminals to store the recording and timing markers. Messages are monitored from the plurality of

user terminals during playback. A synchronization message is generated to control the playback process in the plurality of user equipment by utilizing at least account information received in a message from a user terminal with highest priority, and by utilizing the timing markers that are stored with the recording.

Applicants respectfully submit that embodiments of the present invention are advantageous over the arrangements described in the cited references in that the exact position of saved recordings in each of the user terminals can accurately be synchronized by utilizing the timing markers, even when a signal, for example, to stop playback takes different amounts of time to arrive at the different user terminals. If such a signal takes different amounts of time to arrive at different user terminals, then they may stop at different positions. The timing markers allow for all the terminals to be set to the same playback position so as to be accurately synchronized. Applicants respectfully that the cited references fails to disclose or suggest all of the features recited in any of the above claims.

Osawa is directed to a video information providing/receiving system in which manual operations such as fast forward, rewind, pause and slow play are saved in an operation history information file such that on subsequent playbacks of the video information, the user can select the saved operation history information such that the video information is played back with the same sequence of operations without the user having to manually select the operation. On subsequent playing of the video information with an operation history information file selected, a user can manually override the pre-

recorded operations if the manual operation priority flag is ON, while if the manual operation priority flag is OFF, then a user cannot override the pre-recorded operations.

Osawa further describes an example in which a teacher gives a particular lecture to a particular audience with the same educational video information that has been used for another audience, the teacher can play back the educational video information using the same method as previously used without performing the same operations that he or she performed before. A number of operation history information files can be stored such that subsequent play back to different audiences can emphasize different portions of the video information according to the audience. However, Osawa is silent with regards to synchronized events. The teacher example merely mentions that the teacher may later on see how the students have viewed the video (what operations they have performed on it, e.g. fast forward etc.) (See Osawa at column 12 lines 9-24).

Applicants respectfully submit that Osawa fails to disclose or suggest at least the feature of the server being configured to send synchronization messages to the plurality of user terminals during playback of a recording, thereby causing the plurality of user terminals to store the recording and timing markers, and the feature of generating a synchronization message to control the playback process in the plurality of user equipment by utilizing at least account information received in a message from a user terminal with highest priority, and by utilizing timing markers that are stored with the recording, as recited in claim 19. Osawa merely discloses user terminals comprising a

buffer than stores requested video information, but is silent with regards to storing recordings including timing markers at each user terminal. As discussed above, the timing markers allow playback to be controlled in the plurality of user terminals.

Based at least on the above, applicants respectfully submit that Osawa fails to disclose or suggest all of the features recited in claim 19. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) of claim 19 is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejected claims 1-2 and 4-11 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over Osawa in view of US Patent No. 5,808,662 to Kinney et al. (Kinney). The Office Action took the position that Osawa disclosed all of the features of these claims except of transmitting a status message to the terminals. The Office Action asserted that Kinney disclosed this feature. Applicants respectfully submit that the cited references taken individually or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest all of the features recited in any of the pending claims.

Claim 1, from which claims 2-11 depend, is directed to a method for providing synchronized service in a communications network. At least one group of user terminals is formed , wherein each of the user terminals are assigned different rights to control a playback of a recording and allocating at least one channel to an individual group. A recording is transmitted to the user terminals of a group thus formed, each recording including timing markers, each of which indicates an internal position within the recording. At least part of the recording is stored prior to its playback at each user terminal, wherein the storing further includes storing the timing markers. A start

command is sent to each user terminal of the group. In response to the start command, the playback of the recording is started at each user terminal. Status information is maintained for the recording, the status information indicating at least the playback position of the recording. A status message is transmitted to the user terminals, the message indicating new status information concerning the recording. The playback status at each user terminal is changed according to the new status information. The playback in the plurality of user equipment is controlled by utilizing at least information received in a message from a user terminal with highest priority and by utilizing the stored timing markers.

Embodiments of the present invention and Osawa are discussed above. Kinney is directed to synchronized, interactive playback of digital movies across a network. Kinney discloses playing movie data in a substantially synchronized manner at each playback system according to playback control data requested by one of the participants. Further, Kinney discloses allowing a participant to join the viewing of a movie. In doing so, the participant sends a "hello event." A master ("the location that initiated the session or event") sends back a "seek event" which is required in order to advance the movie viewed by the participant at the remote system to the frame that all other participants are currently viewing. See column 6 lines 55-65 and Figures 2A, 2B and 2C of Kinney.

Applicants respectfully submit that the cited references fail to disclose or suggest at least the feature of storing at least part of the recording prior to its playback at each user terminal, wherein the storing further includes storing the timing markers, and the

feature of controlling the playback in the plurality of user equipment by utilizing at least information received in a message from a user terminal with highest priority by utilizing the stored timing markers, as recited in claim 1. The Office Action relied on Osawa to disclose this feature. The present claims recite that a recording is transmitted to the user terminals, each recording including timing markers each of which indicates an internal position within the recording and storing at least part of this recording prior to its playback at each user terminal. Osawa merely describes that user terminals that include a buffer that stores requested video information. In the "Response to Arguments" section, on pages 5 - 6 of the Office Action, it was asserted that Osawa discloses user terminal that comprises a buffer that stores requested video information received from the video information providing host for each period of time or for each data amount. The Office Action cited Osawa at column 5 lines 20-33. Further, at column 11, lines 27-33, Osawa discusses that the "video information editing unit 211 successfully records positions (time) and operations (for example, a normal playback operation, a fast-forward operation, a rewind operation, a stop operation, and a pause operation)". However, Osawa is silent with regards to storing recordings including timing markers, at each user terminal and then utilizing the stored timing markers in controlling playback of the recording. As discussed above, the timing markers allow playback to be controlled in the plurality of user terminals.

Applicants respectfully submit that because claims 2 and 4-11 depend from claim 1, these claims are allowable at least for the same reasons as claim 1, and for the additional features recited in these dependent claims.

Based at least on the above, Applicants respectfully submit the cited references taken individually or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest all of the features recited in claims 1-2 and 4-11. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-2 and 4-11 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejected claims 3 and 12-18 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over Osawa, in view of Kinney, in further view of US Patent No. 5,583,561 to Baker et al. (Baker). The Office Action took the position that Osawa and Kinney disclosed all of the features recited in these claims with the exception of forming several user groups. Applicants respectfully submit that the cited references taken individually or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest all of the features of any of the pending claims.

Osawa and Kinney are discussed above. Baker is directed to a multicast digital video data server using synchronization groups. Baker describes a system and method for distributing real-time, compressed, digital video data from a video library composed of mass storage devices through a digital video server to large numbers of viewers via distribution networks. In Baker, the server obtains selected frames of video data for viewer-requested programs from high-speed memory using a buffering strategy, replicates the data via a multi-cast technique for each viewer listed in an assigned

synchronization group and forwards the data to each viewer's site where it is decompressed, decoded, and converted for display on a monitor or computer display. Baker is relied upon in the Office Action to disclose the feature of forming several user groups.

Applicants respectfully submit that because claim 3 depends from claim 1 Osawa and Kinney are deficient at least for the same reasons discussed above, and Baker fails to cure these deficiencies. Specifically, Baker fails to disclose or suggest Applicants respectfully submit that Osawa fails to disclose or suggest at least the feature of generating a synchronization message for controlling the playback process in the plurality of user equipment by utilizing at least account information received in a message from a user terminal with highest priority, and by utilizing timing markers that are stored with the recording, as recited in claim 1. Baker merely discloses obtains selected frames of video data for viewer-requested programs from high-speed memory using a buffering strategy. Thus, Baker fails to cure the deficiencies of Osawa and Kinney.

Claims 12, from which claims 13-18 depend, recites a system for providing synchronized playback of recordings in a communications network with transmission channels. A server is configured to manage recordings stored within the system. User terminals are configured to store and play the recordings. A transmission unit is configured to transmit the recordings to the user terminals through at least one channel, wherein each recording includes timing markers (TM), each of which indicates an internal position within the recording, wherein the timing markers are stored with the

recordings. A first management unit is configured to maintain information on user groups formed in the system, the information indicating the user terminal(s) belonging to each group, the channel(s) assigned to each group, and the recording(s) being used by the group, wherein each of the user terminals belonging to a group have different priority rights for controlling playback of a recording. A second management unit is configured to maintain status information for said recordings, the status information indicating at least the playback position of the recording. A first control unit is configured to send status information to the user terminals of a group. A second control unit at each user terminal, responsive to the first control means, is configured to control the playback in the user terminal according to said status information. The playback of the recording in the plurality of user equipment is controlled at least by utilizing information received in a message from a user terminal with highest priority and by further utilizing the stored timing markers.

Applicants respectfully submit that the cited references fail to disclose or suggest the feature of user terminals configured to store and play the recordings, and the feature of wherein each recording includes timing markers (TM), each of which indicates an internal position within the recording, wherein the timing markers are stored with the recordings, as recited in claim 12. Further, the cited references fail to disclose or suggest at least playback of the recording in the plurality of user equipment is controlled at least by utilizing information received in a message from a user terminal with highest priority with highest priority and by utilizing the stored timing markers, as recited in claim 12.

The Office Action relied on Osawa to disclose this feature. However, as stated above, Osawa is silent with regards to the user terminals storing the recording and the timing markers, and controlling playback of the recording by utilizing the timing markers. Applicants submit that Kinney and Baker, fail to cure the deficiencies of Osawa, as discussed above.

Applicants respectfully submit that because claims 13-18 depend from claim 12, these claims are allowable at least for the same reasons as claim 12, as well as the additional features recited in these dependent claims.

Based at least on the above, Applicants respectfully submit that the cited references fail to disclose or suggest all of the features of claims 3 and 12-18. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) of claims 3, 12-18 is respectfully requested.

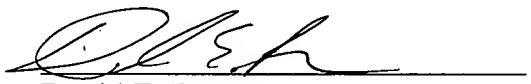
As discussed above, new claim 20 is added. Applicants respectfully submit that claim 20 recites features that are neither disclosed nor suggested in any of the cited references.

Applicants respectfully submit that each of claims 1-20 recite features that are neither disclosed nor suggested in any of the cited references. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that each of claims 1-20 be allowed and this application passed to issue.

If for any reason the Examiner determines that the application is not now in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact, by telephone, the applicant's undersigned attorney at the indicated telephone number to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this application.

In the event this paper is not being timely filed, the applicant respectfully petitions for an appropriate extension of time. Any fees for such an extension together with any additional fees may be charged to Counsel's Deposit Account 50-2222.

Respectfully submitted,



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Enclosures: Additional Claim Fee Transmittal
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